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Whitfield J. Bell, Jr. Librarian

June 29, 1973

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, Ca. 94305

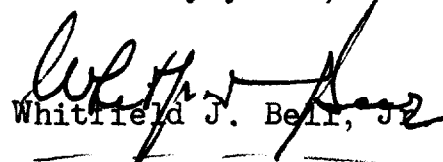
Dear Dr. Lederberg:

In reply to your inquiry of June 10 concerning references in contemporary letters of geneticists to Avery's publication of 1944, I have to report that we have found nothing -- that is, by using the kinds of indexes and catalogues that librarians make. There could be a reference in the correspondence of two persons not directly concerned with the problem. Can you give me the names of persons who might have appreciated the significance of Avery's work and have commented on it to a colleague? Then we can check what we have of their letters for the years 1944-47.

As a general historian, I am much interested in the historiographical implications of your question. Who was it who said, Pour l'histoire, les textes; pour la science, les faits? Whatever one thinks of the author's conception of the sciences, he has rather limited the scope of historical evidence, which must try, when necessary, to go beyond les textes -- but how and under what controls? Anyone who has ever been intimately involved in an event appreciates how inadequate even the best journalist's report of it is. For one thing, we tend to see a logic in events that was not there at the time; we impose a pattern on events in order to handle and understand them. But how much falls outside our frame!

Thank you for your suggestions of books for the Library. I shall be grateful for any others you care to send.

Faithfully yours,


Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.

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